DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 297 065 UD 026 296

TITLE Cohort Dropout Study: The Class of 1986. OEA Analytic Report.
INSTITUTION New York City Board of Education, Brooklyn. Office of Educational Assessment.
PUB DATE Oct 87
NOTE 45p.; For results for the class of 1987 and an update on the class of 1986, see UD 026 301.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Age Differences; *Dropout Characteristics; *Dropout Rate; Dropout Research; Educational Attainment; High Schools; *High School Students; Longitudinal Studies; Sex Differences; *Urban Education
IDENTIFIERS *New York (New York)

ABSTRACT

In order to determine the extent to which New York City students are dropping out of high school, the progress of the over 70,000 members of the class of 1986 was followed from September 1982, through June 1986. By the date of their anticipated graduation, the class of 1986 was characterized by the following: (1) 22 percent had dropped out; (2) 12 percent had moved out of the city and/or had enrolled in other educational institutions; (3) 41 percent had completed their education successfully, 36 percent by earning a high school diploma and 5 percent by earning a General Equivalency Diploma (GED); (4) 21 percent remained enrolled in the school system; (5) 4 percent were of "unknown status" (they were not attending school, but either their discharge from school was not recorded due to a data-entry error, or they had not been officially discharged); (6) both the dropout rate and the graduation rate will rise as students from the "still enrolled" category complete their education; (7) a third of the students were already overage when they entered grade 9, and they were the students most likely to drop out; (8) females had significantly higher graduation rates and lower dropout rates than males; (9) almost three-quarters of dropouts never proceeded beyond grade 10; (10) over a third of dropouts left school at age 19 or older, suggesting that many persist in school beyond the age of 18 despite the fact that they fail to progress from grade to grade. Data are presented on 29 tables and figures. (BJV)

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8-1-88 UD

ED297065

Analytic Report
O.E.A. Data Analysis Section
Raymond Domanico, Administrator
October, 1987

COHORT DROPOUT STUDY: THE CLASS OF 1986

Prepared by the

Analytic Studies Unit

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SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

To what extent are New York City students dropping out of high school? To address this question, the Office of Educational Assessment followed the progress of the class of 1986. We traced the school careers of more than 70,000 students in this cohort from September, 1982, when they first entered grade 9, through June, 1986, their anticipated graduation date. As of that date:

- 22 percent had dropped out.
- 12 percent had moved out of the city and/or enrolled in other educational institutions.
- 41 percent had completed their education successfully, 36 percent by earning a high school diploma and 5 percent by earning a G.E.D.
- 21 percent remained enrolled in the school system.
- 4 percent were of "unknown status": they were not attending school, but either their discharge from school was not recorded due to a data-entry error, or they had not been officially discharged.

Calculating the dropout rate for this large group was a major objective of our study. The number that emerged from our study -- 22 percent -- was lower than that reported in other analyses. Our figure must be regarded as preliminary, and will rise. We could not compute a final dropout rate based on June 30, 1986 outcomes, since nearly a quarter of students in the class of 1986 were still enrolled in the school system at that time.

Two major factors depressed the dropout rate for the class of 1986. First, our figure does not reflect outcomes for the quarter of the class who fell into the "still enrolled" and "unknown status" categories. Based on attendance data, we expect that the dropout rate will ultimately be higher than 22 percent.

Second, the promotional policy introduced in 1981 removed some 10,000 low-achieving students -- those most at risk of dropping out -- from the class of 1986, and added them to the class of 1987. Preliminary data suggest that dropout rates for the classes of 1987 and 1988 will be higher than that of the class of 1986.

We drew the following additional conclusions based on outcomes observed as of June 30, 1986:

- As with the dropout rate, the 41 percent figure of students earning high school or equivalency diplomas will ultimately rise as students from the "still enrolled" category complete their education.

- A third of the students were already overage when they entered grade 9; these were the students who were most likely to drop out.

- Females had significantly higher graduation rates and lower dropout rates than males.

- Almost three-quarters of dropouts never proceeded beyond grade 10; at the same time, more than a third of dropouts left school at age 19 or older. This suggests that many persist in school beyond the age of 18 despite the fact that they fail to progress from grade to grade.

The Office of Educational Assessment will present a follow-up report in Spring, 1988. At that time, we will have a clearer picture of the subsequent actions of students listed in this report as "still enrolled." Although we will also have more up-to-date information about students in the "unknown status" group, the percentage of students included in that group will continue to be an open issue in future years unless it is resolved through an annual, independent audit of the Student Information System.

I. BACKGROUND

To what extent are New York City's students dropping out of high school education? This question is of vital concern to all New Yorkers who care about public education, and who are committed to our City's intellectual and economic well-being.

To address this question, the New York City Board of Education has issued annual Dropout Reports since 1979. Each of these reports estimated a dropout rate based on the number and percent of students, age 14 and older, who dropped out of school in a single year.

Now, for the first time, we can paint a more detailed, comprehensive picture by reporting the results of a longitudinal study. This study tracked a large group of students -- more than 70,000 youngsters whose anticipated graduation date was June, 1986 -- over a four-year period. Rather than estimating a dropout rate, it presents actual dropout, graduation, and transfer rates for these students. This method of computing dropout, graduation, and transfer rates -- the cohort tracking method -- is considered to be more accurate than other procedures.

Definition of Cohorts

Section II presents findings on students who were expected to graduate in 1986; Section III compares these results to those computed for two other groups. We refer to these three cohorts according to their anticipated graduation dates as the classes of 1986, 1987, and 1988.

The class of 1986 encompasses all students who:

- o newly entered grade 9 during the 1982-83 school year
- o transferred into the school system in grade 10 during 1983-84
- o transferred into grade 11 during 1984-85
- o transferred into grade 12 during 1985-86.

Based on a normal four-year high school sequence, all of these students were expected to graduate in June, 1986.

The class of 1987 is defined as all students who:

- o newly entered grade 9 in 1983-84
- o transferred into grade 10 1984-85
- o transferred into grade 11 in 1985-86.

(The class of 1987 will also include students who entered grade 12 during 1986-87. We will make a full report on the class of 1987 in early Spring, 1988.)

Finally, the class of 1988 encompasses all students who:

- o newly entered grade 9 during 1984-85
- o transferred into grade 10 during 1985-86.

(This class will eventually include students transferring into grade 11 in 1986-87 and those transferring into grade 12 in 1987-88.)

Definition of Outcomes

For the purposes of our analysis, we defined five different types of outcomes based on students' status at the end of the 1986 school year:

1) Graduates and Other School Completers: students who have received either a High School Diploma, General Equivalency Diploma or Special Education Certificate.

2) Dropouts: students who have been discharged from the school system and who left without enrolling in some other educational program that leads to either a high school diploma or a G.E.D.

3) Transfers or Students Leaving the School System: students who either left the system to enroll in another educational program (i.e., parochial school, left New York City, G.E.D. preparation program, etc.) or who died.

4) Students Still Enrolled in the School System: students who were still on register as of June 30, 1986.

5) Unknown Status: students whose discharges have not been recorded due to data-entry errors, or who have stopped attending school but have not been discharged.

Special Education Students

Because self-contained special education classes are often ungraded, we do not have systematic grade placement information for these students. We therefore defined special education cohorts by age; that is, according to the school year during which a student reached age 15:

Special Education Class	School Year of Student's 15th Birthday
1986	1982-83
1987	1983-84
1988	1984-85

Because we have applied different criteria to define our general education and special education cohorts, all findings are presented separately for the two groups.

Data Source

The source of student information in this report is the school system's computerized Student Information System (SIS). This system maintains information provided by schools on students' school and grade placement, as well as information about the circumstances under which students either enter or leave the school system.

This data base is relatively new, and contains consistent information beginning with the 1981-82 school year. This fact has, to some extent, shaped our study.

First, we have defined our general education cohorts in terms of the year in which students entered grades 9, 10, 11, and 12. If the data base had been older, we could have defined our

class of 1986 as all students who entered grade 1 in 1974-75.

Second, the composition of our cohort has been affected by school system policies instituted before the 1982-83 school year. These policies undoubtedly skew our findings, but without earlier data we cannot offer firm conclusions about their impact.

Case in point: the promotional policy. Our cohort was among the first group of students to be affected by the more stringent promotional policy instituted in June 1981, when the class of 1986 was completing grade 7. As a result, some 10,000 students were held over in grade 7 for the 1981-82 school year.

These 10,000 low-achieving students left the class of 1986, and joined the classes of 1987 and 1988 before our data base became fully operational. If accurate data had been available for the 1980-81 school year, we would have treated these holdovers as members of the class of 1986. Without such accurate data, this is not possible.

The effect of the promotional policy will be discussed more fully in Section III of this report, where we analyze and compare the dropout rates for the classes of 1986, 1987, and 1988.

II. FINDINGS FOR THE CLASS OF 1986

Entry into the Cohort

The class of 1986 consisted of 71,484 general education students, of whom the vast majority entered grade 9 in 1982-83. Table 1 displays the grade levels at which students entered the class of 1986. Table 2 reports age and gender. Most students were of the expected age when they entered the class of 1986; that is, they would reach their eighteenth birthday during the 1985-86 school year. However, more than a third -- 38.4 percent -- were older. The class of 1986 was almost evenly divided between males and females.

Overall Findings on School Leavers

Table 3 presents the number of students in each outcome group who left the school system each year between 1982-83 and 1985-86. (Small numbers of students in the class of 1986 completed their high school education before the 1985-86 school year, either by earning a G.E.D. or gaining early admission to college.)

The number of dropouts from the class of 1986 increased dramatically from year to year. During the 1982-83 school year, 780 dropped out; during the 1985-86 school year, 6,242 students dropped out of school. To some extent, these findings relate to the Compulsory Education Law, which requires students to remain enrolled in school until age 17. The number of students transferring out of the system declined steadily from 2,570 students in 1982-83 to 1,903 in 1985-86.

TABLE 1

Entry Into The Class Of 1986

Students who entered Grade 9 in 1982-83	59,822
Students newly admitted to Grade 10 in 1983-84	7,268
Students newly admitted to Grade 11 in 1984-85	3,759
Students newly admitted to Grade 12 in 1985-86	635
Total Number of Students in the Class of 1986	71,484

TABLE 2

Class Of 1986

Age And Gender Distribution

Age as of June, 1986	Number of Students	Percent of Class of 1986
16	84	0.1 %
17	1,913	2.7
18	41,934	58.7
19	17,550	24.6
20	5,703	8.0
21	1,915	2.7
22+	2,275	3.1
Missing Data	100	0.1
Total	71,484	100.0
Gender		
Female	35,850	50.2 %
Male	35,613	49.8
Missing Data	21	-
Total	71,484	100.0

TABLE 3

Exit From The Class Of 1986

In 1982-83:	
Graduates and other school completers	51
Dropouts	780
Transfers out	2,570
In 1983-84:	
Graduates and other school completers	434
Dropouts	3,273
Transfers out	2,214
In 1984-85:	
Graduates and other school completers	1,496
Dropouts	5,307
Transfers out	2,067
In 1985-86:	
Graduates and other school completers	27,329
Dropouts	6,242
Transfers out	1,903
Four Year Totals	
Graduates and other school completers	29,310 (41%)
Dropouts	15,602 (22%)
Transfers out	8,754 (12%)
Students still enrolled in the school system as of June 30, 1986	15,296 (21%)
Students with unknown status	2,522 (4%)

Figure 1 illustrates the following major findings about the status of the class of 1986 at the end of the 1985-86 school year:

- 22 percent (15,602) had dropped out
- 12 percent (8,754) had moved out of the City and/or enrolled in other educational institutions.
- 41 percent (29,310 students) had completed their high school education successfully
- 21 percent (15,296) remained enrolled in the school system
- 4 percent (2,522) were in the "unknown status" category: either their discharge was not recorded due to a data-entry error, or they have stopped attending school but have not been discharged.

These findings challenge common assumptions about the school system, and warrant a closer look.

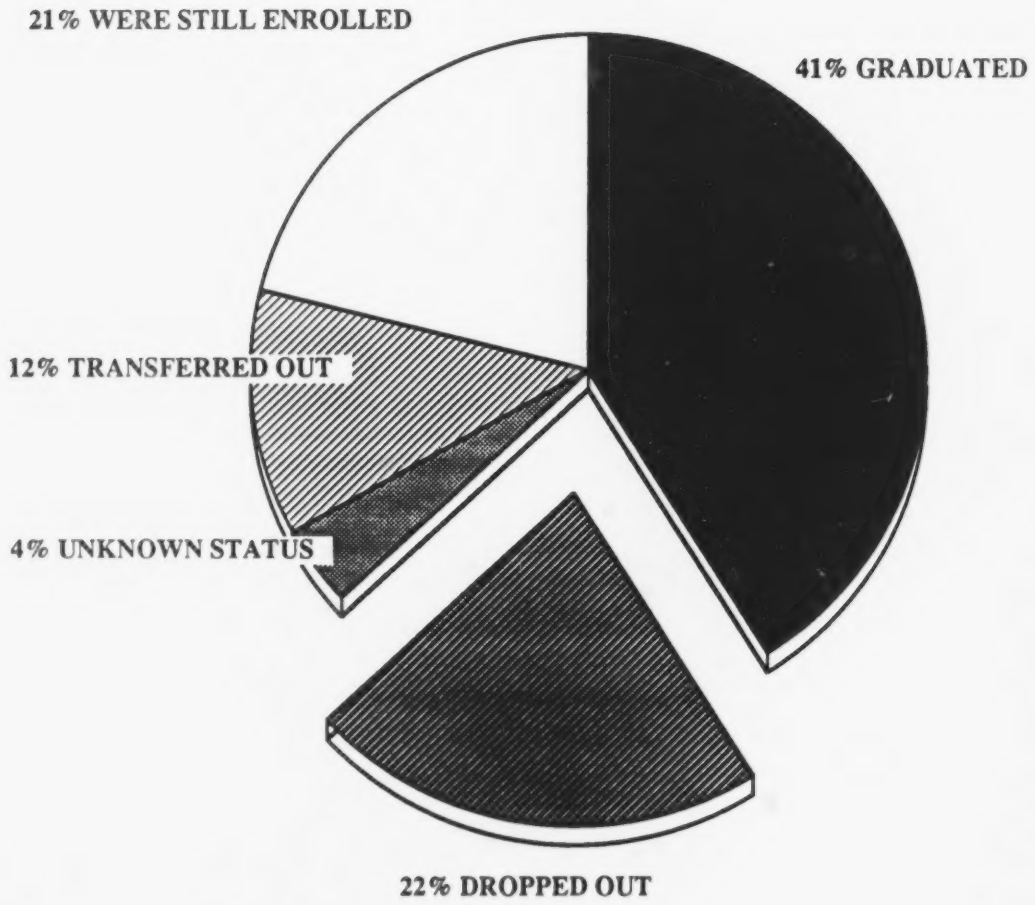
Beyond the Fourth Year of High School. Most striking is the finding that nearly a quarter of our students do not end their high school career after four full years by graduating, dropping out, or transferring. The fact that many of New York City's students continue their high school education beyond the fourth year stands in contrast to the most common assumption of school organization in the United States -- that students complete their high school education by age 18, after 12 years of schooling.

This finding has serious implications for the calculation of dropout and graduation rates. All of the methods applied by

FIGURE 1

Outcomes for the Class of 1986

As of June 30, 1986



Number of Students = 71,484

analysts (inside and outside the school system) to calculate dropout rates rest on the assumption that high school is a four year-process, and that after four years, students become either graduates or dropouts. Our data show that this assumption is simply not true and that in order to make a final assessment of the outcomes for the class of 1986 we will need to wait for data from the 1986-87, and perhaps the 1987-88, school years.

The Dropout Rate. Our cohort study yielded a lower dropout rate than other analyses of the dropout rate for two major reasons.

First, we cannot yet close the books on the class of 1986: 22 percent of this cohort were still enrolled in school as of June 30, 1986. The information we have about the "still enrolled" group -- particularly about those students with relatively poor attendance -- suggests that as time passes, a significant percentage of these students will drop out. Therefore we expect that when all the facts are in, the dropout rate for the class of 1986 will rise.

Second, data on the class of 1986 reflect the fact that when the promotional policy was implemented six years ago, many low-achieving students -- those at greatest risk of dropping out -- left this class, and entered the class of 1987.

The School Completion Rate. Our study yielded a four-year school completion rate of 41 percent. As with the dropout rate, this figure will rise as students from the "still enrolled"

category complete their education. It is likely that a significant percentage of the students in the "still enrolled" category -- especially those who have already progressed to the eleventh or twelfth grade -- will ultimately earn high school or equivalency diplomas.

Student Characteristics and School Completion Data

Grade of Entry to Cohort. Table 4 presents graduation, dropout, transfer, still enrolled, and unknown status rates for groups of students that entered our the class of 1986 at different grades. Students who entered the cohort in grade 10, in 1983-84, tended to have higher dropout rates and lower graduation rates than the other groups. This may be related to the policy of classifying students entering the school system's G.E.D. preparation programs as tenth graders.

Gender. Table 5 presents information on outcomes for females and males; Figure 2 illustrates these data. Females had a higher graduation rate (45 percent) than males (37 percent). Females also had a lower dropout rate (20 percent) than males; fewer females (23 percent) remained enrolled in school after four years than males (27 percent).

Age. Table 6 displays outcomes for three groups of students: those who entered the cohort at the expected age for their grade; those who were younger; and those who were older. Figure 3 illustrate these findings. Overage students had a significantly higher dropout rate (38 percent) than students of the expected age (12 percent). Of the almost 42,000 students who

TABLE 4

Class Of 1986

Outcomes For Students
By
Grade Of Entry To Cohort

Grade of Entry	N	Graduates N	%	Dropouts N	%	Transfers N	%	Still Enrolled* N	%
9	59,822	25,054	(42)	12,319	(21)	7,297	(12)	15,152	(25)
10	7,268	2,370	(32)	2,588	(36)	902	(13)	1,408	(19)
11	3,759	1,598	(42)	633	(17)	496	(13)	1,032	(28)
12	635	288	(45)	62	(10)	59	(10)	226	(35)
Total	71,484	29,310	(41)	15,602	(22)	8,754	(12)	17,818	(25)

TABLE 5

Class Of 1986

Outcomes For Students
By
Gender

Gender	N	Graduates N	%	Dropouts N	%	Transfers N	%	Still Enrolled* N	%
Female	35,850	16,230	(45)	7,182	(20)	4,300	(12)	8,138	(23)
Male	35,613	13,075	(37)	8,416	(24)	4,444	(12)	9,678	(27)
Total	71,484	29,310	(41)	15,602	(22)	8,754	(12)	17,818	(25)

TABLE 6

Class Of 1986

Outcomes For Students
By
Age

Age of Student	N	Graduates N	%	Dropouts N	%	Transfers N	%	Still Enrolled* N	%
Under 18	1,997	1,028	(51)	95	(5)	281	(14)	593	(30)
18	41,934	20,627	(49)	4,996	(12)	5,432	(13)	10,879	(26)
Over 18	27,443	7,618	(28)	10,475	(38)	3,028	(11)	6,320	(23)
Total	71,484	29,310	(41)	15,602	(22)	8,754	(12)	17,818	(25)

* Includes students of unknown status

FIGURE 2

Class of 1986

Outcomes for Females and Males

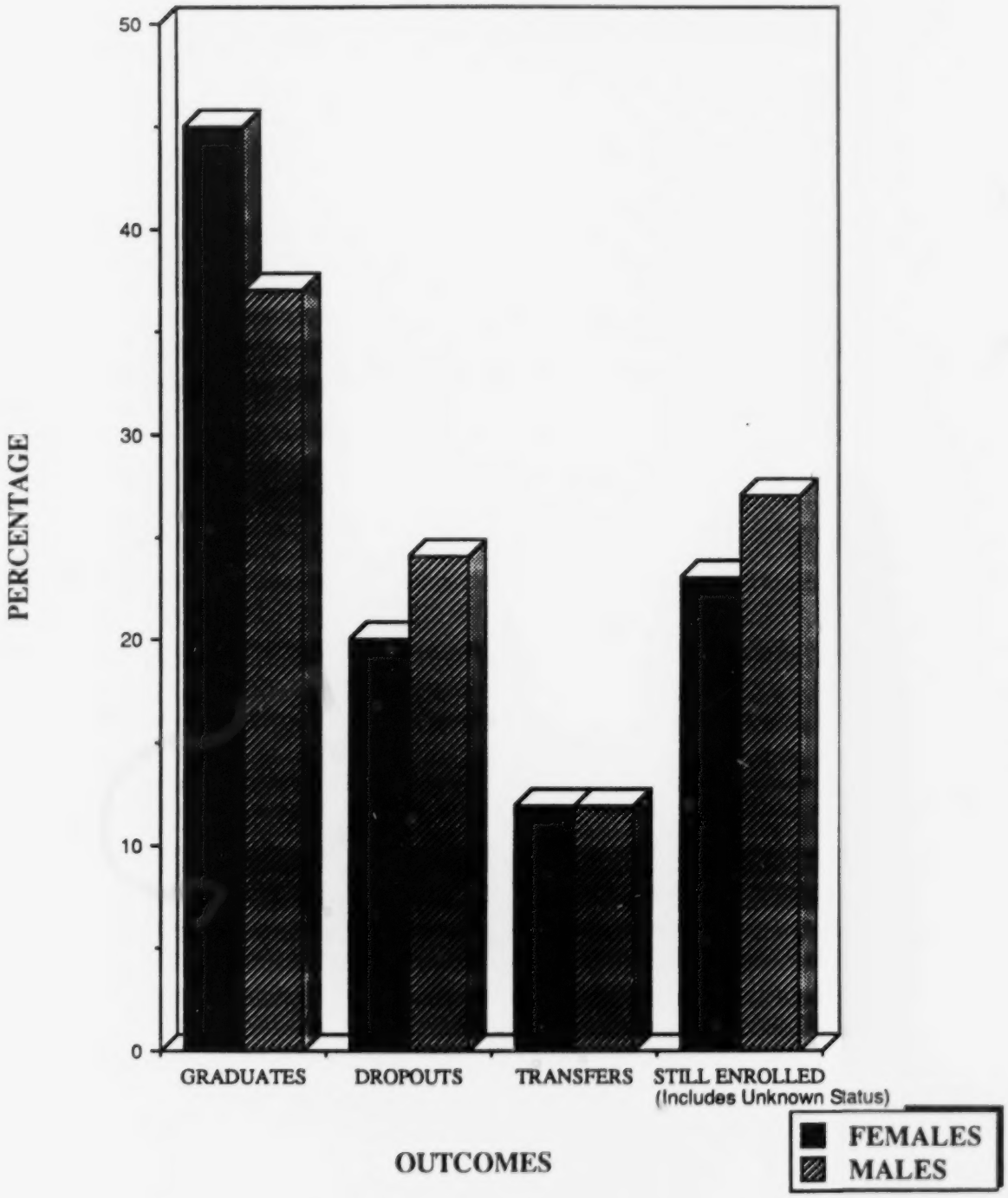
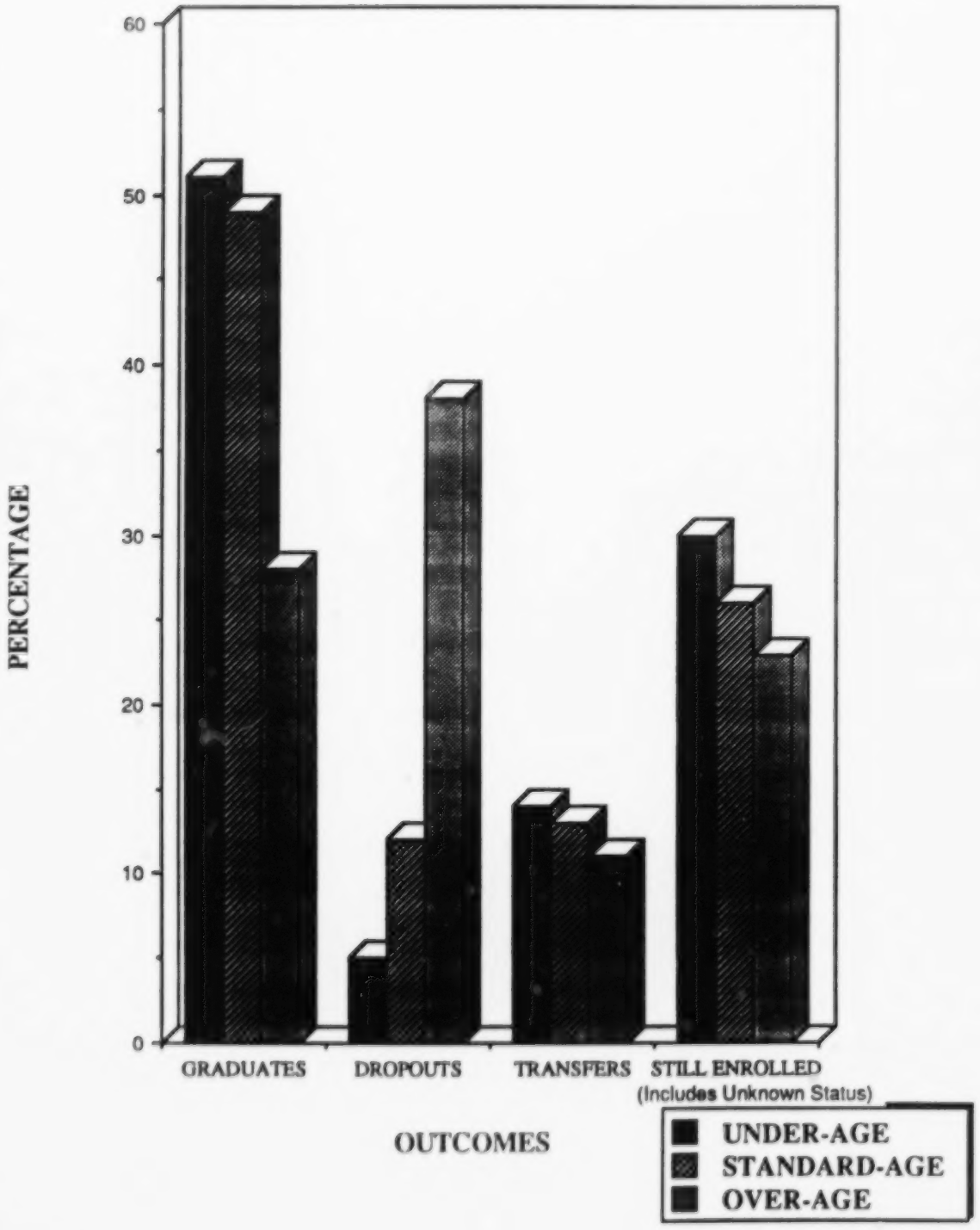


FIGURE 3

Class of 1986
Outcomes Versus Age At Entry to Cohort



entered grade 9 at the expected age, only 12 percent dropped out over the four years under study.

Additional Data on Graduates and Other School Completers

Table 7 reports the age at which students complete their high school education. As expected, more than 70 percent of graduates were age 18. However, significant numbers of students graduated at age 19 (17 percent) or older (6 percent).

Table 8 gives further information about school completers. The vast majority, 89 percent, received high school diplomas; 11 percent earned G.E.D.s.

Additional Data on Dropouts

Table 9 reports the grade level at which students dropped out. Almost half left school in grade 10; a quarter left school in grade 9. Coupled with our earlier finding -- that three-quarters of the students who dropped out did so in the third and fourth year -- these findings indicate that the students who eventually drop out of school are, in large numbers, those who have been held over in grades 9 and 10.

Table 10 presents the age at which students drop out of school. We found that 40 percent of students who dropped out were age 18; 17 percent were 17, the youngest age allowed by the Compulsory Education Law. A major finding is that one in three dropouts -- more than 30 percent -- stayed in school to age 19 and beyond before leaving.

TABLE 7

Class Of 1986

Age Upon Graduation

Age upon Graduation	Number of Students	Percent of Graduates
16	52	0.2 %
17	1,355	4.6
18	20,913	71.4
19	5,048	17.2
20	1,132	3.9
21	479	1.6
22+	284	0.9
Missing	47	0.2
Total	29,310	100.0

TABLE 8

Class Of 1986

Categories Of Graduates And Other School Completers

	Number of Students	Percent of School Completers
High School Diploma	26,031	89.0
General Equivalency Diploma	3,215	11.0
Special Education Diploma	18	-
Early College Admission	46	-
Total	29,310	100.0

TABLE 9

Class Of 1986

Grade Upon Dropping Out

Grade upon Dropping Out	Number of Students	Percent of Dropouts
9	3,966	25.4 %
10	7,218	46.3
11	2,675	17.1
12	537	3.4
Special Education	394	2.5
Missing Data	812	5.2
Total	15,602	100.0

TABLE 10

Class Of 1986

Age Upon Dropping Out

Age upon Dropping Out	Number of Students	Percent of Dropouts
14	3	-
15	59	0.4
16	340	2.2
17	2,654	17.0
18	6,834	43.8
19	3,344	21.4
20	1,238	7.9
21	692	4.4
22	402	2.5
Missing Data	36	0.2
Total	15,602	100.0

Table 11 presents the specific circumstances under which students dropped out. Almost three-quarters of the dropouts fell into the "over 17 with parental consent" category.

Additional Data on Transfers and Other School Leavers

Table 12 presents the specific categories of discharge for students who transferred or otherwise left the system. Of this group, nearly two-thirds -- 64 percent -- left New York City. An additional 23 percent enrolled in either parochial or private school. Almost 9 percent left the school system to enroll in a G.E.D. preparation program.

It is worth noting that during the four years under study, fewer students transferred out of the system (8,754) than into the system (11,652). (See Table 1.)

Additional Information on Students Still Enrolled in the System

A significant finding of the report is that 21 percent of the class of 1986 remained enrolled in the school system after June, 1986. In order to assess their progress, we looked at their attendance and grade placement data. Table 13 displays attendance data for fall, 1985 and spring, 1986.

A quarter of these students were absent more than 20 days -- a full month -- per semester. Although they have yet not dropped out, these students are only marginally involved in the school system.

Table 14 displays grade placement data for the members of the class of 1986 who remained enrolled in the system: as of

TABLE 11

Class Of 1986

Categories Of Dropouts

Category	Number	Percent of Dropouts
Employment Certificate	664	4.2
Job Corps	328	2.1
Business Or Trade School	379	2.4
Military Service	67	0.4
Discharged To Auxiliary Services Without Confirmed Admission	821	5.3
Discharged To Outreach Center Without Confirmed Admission	217	1.4
Discharged To Evening High Schools Without Confirmed Admission	449	2.9
Other (Over Age 17)	11,452	73.4
Not Found	1,225	7.9
Total	15,602	100.0

Table 12

Class Of 1986

Categories Of Students Transferring Or Leaving The Public School System

Category	Number	Percent of Transfers
Parochial School	1,547	17.6 %
Private School	505	5.7
Institutionalization	130	1.5
G.E.D. Preparation	768	8.7
Home Instruction	30	0.3
Left New York City	5,628	64.0
Deceased	68	0.8
Over 21	69	0.8
Missing Data	9	-
Total	8,754	100.0

TABLE 13

Class Of 1986

1986 Attendance Records Of
Students Who Remain Enrolled In
The School System As Of June 30, 1986*

Fall 1985	Number of Students	Percent of Students
0 - 10 Days Absent	7,521	42.2 %
11 - 20 Days Absent	4,155	23.3
21 - 30 Days Absent	1,666	9.4
31 - 40 Days Absent	817	4.6
More than 40 Days Absent	930	5.2
No Record of Attendance	2,729	15.3
Spring 1986		
0 - 10 Days Absent	6,662	37.4
11 - 20 Days Absent	4,089	22.9
21 - 30 Days Absent	2,059	11.6
31 - 40 Days Absent	1,042	5.8
More than 40 Days Absent	1,444	8.1
No Record of Attendance (Students of unknown status)	2,522	14.2

TABLE 14

Grade Placement Of Students Who Remain
Enrolled In The School System As Of June 30, 1986*

Grade	Number of Students	Percent of Students
9	643	3.6 %
10	2,559	14.4
11	5,835	32.7
12	7,265	40.8
Special Education	790	4.4
Missing Data	726	4.1

* Includes students of unknown status

June 30, 1986, over 70 percent were enrolled in grade 11 or 12; which indicates that they are making progress and that some significant number of them are likely to earn high school or equivalency diplomas.

Additional Data on Students with Unknown Status

Some 2,500 students -- 3 percent of the class of 1986 -- appeared in our database as enrolled, but showed no attendance in the spring semester. It is highly probable that these students have actually left school, and that the enrollment data are erroneous. At this point we do not have any information about the status of these students. As schools make corrections to the database, they will be classified as either dropouts, school completers, or transfers out of the system.

Special Education Class of 1986

Since many self-contained special education classes are ungraded, the Student Information System does not record the grade placement of students enrolled in these classes. We therefore defined the special education class of 1986 as all students in self-contained special education programs who were born in 1968. On June 30, 1986, these students were between seventeen and a half, and eighteen and a half years old. Slightly more than 6,000 students fit this description. Table 15 shows the mix of males and females in this group. Unlike the general education cohort, which is almost evenly divided between males and females, the special education cohort is predominantly male (almost 70 percent).

Table 16 displays outcomes for the special education class of 1986. These students are entitled to a public school education up to and including the year in which they reach age 21. Accordingly, at the end of the 1985-86 school year, few had completed their high school education; most remained active in the school system. A quarter had dropped out.

TABLE 15

Special Education

Class Of 1986
Gender Distribution

Gender	Number of Students	Percent of Class of 1986
Female	1,869	30.5
Male	4,244	69.4
Missing	5	0.1
Total	6,118	100.0

TABLE 16

Exit From The Special Education Class Of 1986

In 1982 - 83:	
Graduates and other school completers	5
Dropouts	25
Transfers out	347
In 1983 - 84:	
Graduates and other school completers	10
Dropouts	91
Transfers out	237
In 1984 - 85:	
Graduates and other school completers	17
Dropouts	361
Transfers out	181
In 1985 - 86:	
Graduates and other school completers	55
Dropouts	1,042
Transfers out	175
Four Year Totals	
Graduates and other school completers	87 (1%)
Dropouts	1,519 (25%)
Transfers out	940 (15%)
Students still enrolled in the school system as of June 30, 1986	3,572 (58%)

III. COMPARISON OF DROPOUT RATES FOR THE CLASS OF 1986, 1987, AND 1988

We can offer some observations about the trend in the dropout rate by analyzing:

- the two-year dropout rate for the classes of 1986, 1987, and 1988; and
- the three-year dropout rate for the classes of 1986 and 1987.

In order to make an informed assessment of the trend in the dropout rate, we must first determine the comparability of the three cohorts.

Preliminary Findings for the Class of 1987

As of June 30, 1986, the class of 1987 consisted of 78,163 general education students -- about 10 percent more than the class of 1986. Table 17 shows when students entered this cohort. Table 18 displays the age distribution: more than half of the class of 1987 (54 percent) were at the expected age when they entered high school. This is a slightly lower percentage than in the previous class. Overall, 43.1 percent of students in the class of 1987 were overage as they entered grade 9, compared to 38.4 percent of the class of 1986.

The fact the class of 1987 was both larger and somewhat older than the class of 1986 reflects the impact that the promotional policy (implemented in 1981) has had on the definition of our cohorts. Students who were originally

TABLE 17

Entry Into The Class Of 1987

Students who entered Grade 9 in 1983-84	67,679
Students newly admitted to Grade 10 in 1984-85	7,460
Students newly admitted to Grade 11 in 1985-86	3,024
Students newly admitted to Grade 12 in 1986-87	N\A
Total Number of Students in the Class of 1987 (As of June 30, 1986)	78,163

TABLE 18

Class Of 1987

Age And Gender Distribution

Age as of June, 1986	Number of Students	Percent of Class of 1986
15	82	0.1 %
16	1,800	2.3
17	42,449	54.3
18	19,921	25.5
19	9,097	11.6
20	2,898	3.7
21	1,087	1.4
22+	752	0.9
Missing Data	77	0.1
Total	78,163	100.0
Gender		
Female	39,258	50.0 %
Male	38,896	49.8
Missing Data	9	-
Total	78,163	100.0

members of the class of 1986 but who were retained in grade 7 in 1982 now appear as overage members of the class of 1987.

Table 19 displays the status of the class of 1987 as of June, 1986. Three years after entering grade 9, a small percentage had completed their education; 17 percent had dropped out, and 10 percent had transferred out.

Preliminary Findings for the Class of 1988

As of June 30, 1986, the class of 1988 consisted of 76,959 general education students. Table 20 presents the year and grade in which students entered this cohort. This class is slightly larger than the class of 1987, and almost 15 percent larger than the class of 1986. Table 21 shows age and gender distribution. Forty-one percent of the class of 1988 were overage as they entered grade 9 -- a slightly smaller percentage than in the class of 1987, but a larger percentage than in the class of 1986.

Table 22 displays the status of the class of 1988 as of June 30, 1986. At that point, 7 percent of the students in the cohort had dropped out and 8 percent had transferred out.

Comparison of Dropout Rates for the Three Classes

Since we do not yet have complete information on outcomes for the classes of 1987 and 1988, we must disaggregate the data from each of the cohorts in order to compare their dropouts rates. Table 23 reports the number and percentage of dropouts from each of the three cohorts according to the grade of entry and the year in which students dropped out. For the

TABLE 19

Exit From The Class of 1987

In 1983-84:		
Graduates and other school completers	52	
Dropouts	1,331	
Transfers out	1,719	
In 1984-85:		
Graduates and other school completers	535	
Dropouts	4,443	
Transfers out	2,732	
In 1985-86:		
Graduates and other school completers	1,828	
Dropouts	7,308	
Transfers out	3,380	
Three Year Totals		
Graduates and other school completers	2,415	(3%)
Dropouts	13,082	(17%)
Transfers out	7,831	(10%)
Students still enrolled in the school system as of June 30, 1986	54,835	(70%)

TABLE 20

Entry To The Class Of 1988

Students who entered Grade 9 in 1984-85	70,993
Students newly admitted to Grade 10 in 1985-8	5,966
Students newly admitted to Grade 11 in 1986-87	N\A
Students newly admitted to Grade 12 in 1987-88	N\A
Total Number of Students in the Class of 1988 (As of June 30, 1986)	76,959

TABLE 21

Class Of 1988

Age And Gender Distribution

Age as of June, 1986	Number of Students	Percent of Class of 1986
14	98	0.1 %
15	1,846	2.4
16	43,086	56.0
17	20,309	26.4
18	7,906	10.3
19	2,218	2.9
20	815	1.1
21	361	0.5
22+	129	0.1
Missing	191	0.2
Total	76,959	100.0
Gender		
Female	38,938	50.6 %
Male	38,013	49.4
Missing	8	-
Total	76,959	100.0

TABLE 22

Exit From The Class Of 1988

In 1984-85:		
Graduates and other school completers	82	
Dropouts	1,271	
Transfers out	2,202	
In 1985-86:		
Graduates and other school completers	442	
Dropouts	4,318	
Transfers out	3,830	
Two Year Totals		
Graduates and other school completers	524	(1%)
Dropouts	5,589	(7%)
Transfers out	6,032	(8%)
Students still enrolled in the school system as of June 30, 1986	64,814	(84%)

class of 1986, 1.3 percent of the students who entered grade 9 in 1982-83 dropped out that year; an additional 3.7 percent dropped out in 1983-84, and an additional 6.7 percent dropped out in 1984-85. Dropout percentages are higher for the class of 1987. Two percent of students who entered the cohort in grade 9 dropped out in the second year and an additional 9.1 percent dropped out during the third year. The dropout percentages for the class of 1988 are slightly lower than those for the class of 1987, but still higher than those for the class of 1986.

Table 24 summarizes all available data, presenting cumulative dropout percentages for the three cohorts for each of the four years under study; Figure 4 illustrates this information. At the end of two years, the class of 1986 had lost 6 percent of its students as dropouts compared to 7.7 percent for the class of 1987 and 7.3 percent for the class of 1988. At the end of three years, the class of 1986 had lost a total of 13.2 percent of its students, and the class of 1987 had lost 16.7 percent of its students as dropouts.

Preliminary data suggest that final dropout rates for the classes of 1987 and 1988 will be higher than that of the class of 1986. This finding reflects the impact of the promotional policy. The classes of 1987 and 1988 are larger than the class of 1986 and contain higher percentages of overage students. The promotional policy has apparently had the long-term effect of reducing the dropout rate only for the class

TABLE 23

Comparison of the Dropout Rates
for the
Classes of 1986, 1987, and 1988

Class Of 1986

Grade of Entry	N	Students Dropping Out In: 1982-83 N	%	1983-84 N	%	1984-85 N	%	1985-86 N	%
9	59,822	780	(1.3)	2,207	(3.7)	4,039	(6.7)	5,293	(8.8)
10	7,268			1,066	(14.7)	1,018	(14.0)	504	(6.9)
11	3,759					250	(6.7)	383	(10.2)
12	635							62	(9.8)

Class Of 1987

Grade of Entry	N	Students Dropping Out In: 1983-83 N	%	1984-85 N	%	1985-86 N	%
9	67,679	1,331	(2.0)	3,758	(5.6)	6,154	(9.1)
10	7,460			685	(9.2)	913	(12.2)
11	3,024					241	(8.0)

Class Of 1988

Grade Of Entry	N	Students Dropping Out In: 1984-85 N	%	1985-86 N	%
9	70,993	1,271	(1.8)	3,850	(5.4)
10	5,966			468	(7.8)

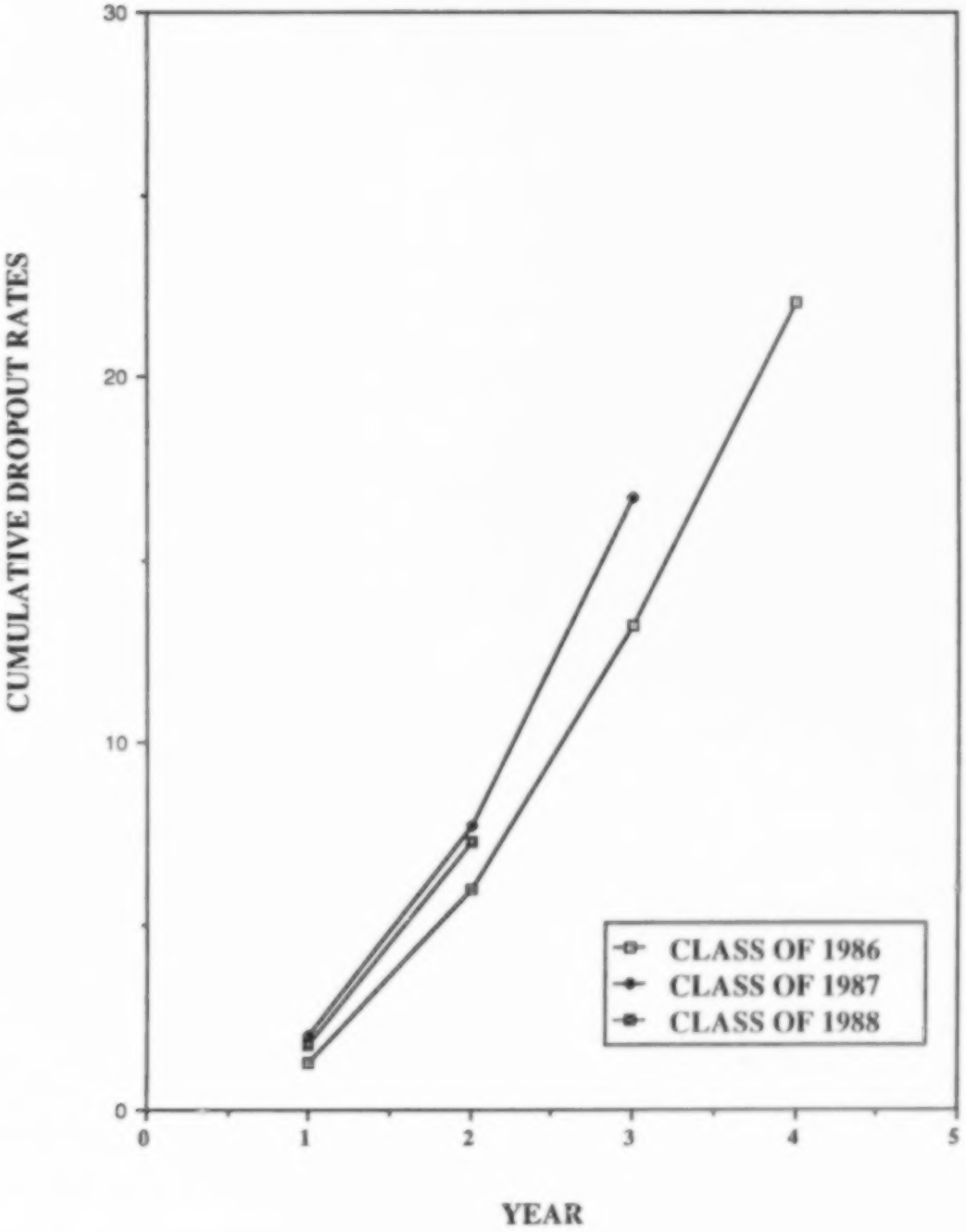
TABLE 24

Cumulative Dropout Rates for the
Classes of 1986, 1987, and 1988

Year	Cumulative Dropout Rates Class Of 1986	Class Of 1987	Class Of 1988
1	1.3	2.0	1.8
2	6.0	7.7	7.3
3	13.2	16.7	N\A
4	22.0	N\A	N\A

FIGURE 4

Cumulative Dropout Rates for Classes of 1986, 1987, and 1988



of 1986: higher dropout rates in the subsequent two classes suggest that the single year of remediation offered to holdovers did not adequately compensate for their academic deficiencies.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

The Office of Educational Assessment undertook a longitudinal study of the class of 1986 to determine the extent to which New York City students are dropping out school. Using information provided by the schools, it computed outcomes for more than 70,000 students whose anticipated graduation date was June, 1986.

A surprising statistic surfaced. Most analysts of school completion and dropout data assume that high school is a four-year process, and that by the end of the fourth year, the vast majority of students will either be graduates or dropouts. We found, however, that nearly a quarter of the class of 1986 was still enrolled in the school system on June 30, 1987.

This means that we cannot close the books on the class of 1986: we will not know for some time how many of these "still enrolled" students will drop out, or how many will graduate. The dropout rate that emerged from this study -- 22 percent -- is therefore a preliminary figure. We assume that many "still enrolled" students will not graduate, based on poor attendance by these students as a group, and we therefore expect that the final dropout statistic will be higher than 22 percent.

Even after this adjustment, the dropout rate resulting from our cohort study will probably fall below that estimated for our school system in previous dropout studies. The major reason for this is the impact of the promotional policy implemented in 1981, which removed some 10,000 low-achieving

students -- those at greatest risk of dropping out -- from the class of 1986. Preliminary data indicate that dropout rates for the classes of 1987 and 1988 will be higher than for the 1986 cohort.

Here are major findings of this study:

- 22 percent of the class had dropped out of school by June, 1986.
- Nearly a quarter (21 percent) of the class of 1986 remained enrolled in the school system after their anticipated graduation date. It would be risky to predict the eventual outcomes for these students. A quarter of them had poor attendance in 1985-86 and are the most likely to drop out. On the other hand, over 70 percent of these students had proceeded as far as the eleventh grade and stand a good chance of eventually graduating.
- 41 percent of the students in the class of 1986 successfully completed their high school education by the end of the 1986 school year; 36 percent of the class earned a high school diploma and 5 percent earned an equivalency diploma.
- 4 percent of students in the class of 1986 had had not been discharged, but did not attend school in the spring 1986 semester. In most cases these students were probably dropouts whose discharges were not reported by schools due to data-entry errors.
- A third of the students were already overage when they entered grade 9; these were the students who were most likely to drop out.
- Females had significantly higher graduation rates and lower dropout rates than males.
- Almost three-quarters of dropouts never proceeded beyond grade 10; at the same time, more than a third of dropouts left school at age 19 or older. This suggests that many persist in school beyond the age of 18 despite the fact that they fail to progress from grade to grade.

Since our findings are necessarily preliminary, we will present a follow-up report on the class of 1986 in Spring, 1988. At that time, we will have a clearer picture of subsequent actions of students listed in this report as "still enrolled." Although we will also have more up-to-date information about students in the "unknown status" group, the percentage of students included in that group will continue to be an open issue in future years unless it is resolved through an annual, independent audit of the Student Information System.

Office of Educational Assessment
Data Analysis Section November, 1987

ADDENDUM TO THE COHORT DROPOUT STUDY: CLASS OF 1986

One of the most significant findings of the Cohort Dropout Study: Class of 1986 was that 25 percent of the of the class of 1986 were still enrolled in the school system or were of unknown status as of June 30, 1986. This finding overshadowed the computation of a dropout rate, which was the major purpose of the study. Our report found a dropout percentage of 22 percent and a school completion percentage of 41 percent as of June 30, 1986, but cautioned that both of these percentages would rise as students from the "still enrolled" and "unknown status" categories either dropped out or graduated.

Although our report did not attempt to predict what percentage of the "still enrolled" students would drop out or graduate, we presented data that suggested that, as time wore on, the "still enrolled" students would fall into the dropout and graduation categories in equal numbers.

We now have preliminary data from the end of the 1986-87 school year. The Student Information System has not yet completed its year end clean-up of the data files for 1986-87 and the data are still subject to change, but the data are accurate enough to give a general picture of what happened to the "still enrolled" members of the class of 1986 in the 1986-87 school year. The following table displays the disposition of these students as of June 30, 1987.

Members of the Class of 1986 who were "Still Enrolled" or of "Unknown Status" as of 6/30/86	17,818
In 1986-87:	
Graduates and other school completers	4,897
Dropouts	4,598
Transfers out	629
Still enrolled as of June 30, 1987	7,694

These preliminary data confirm our hunch that students from the "still enrolled" category would tend to drop out and graduate in equal numbers after the fourth year of high school.

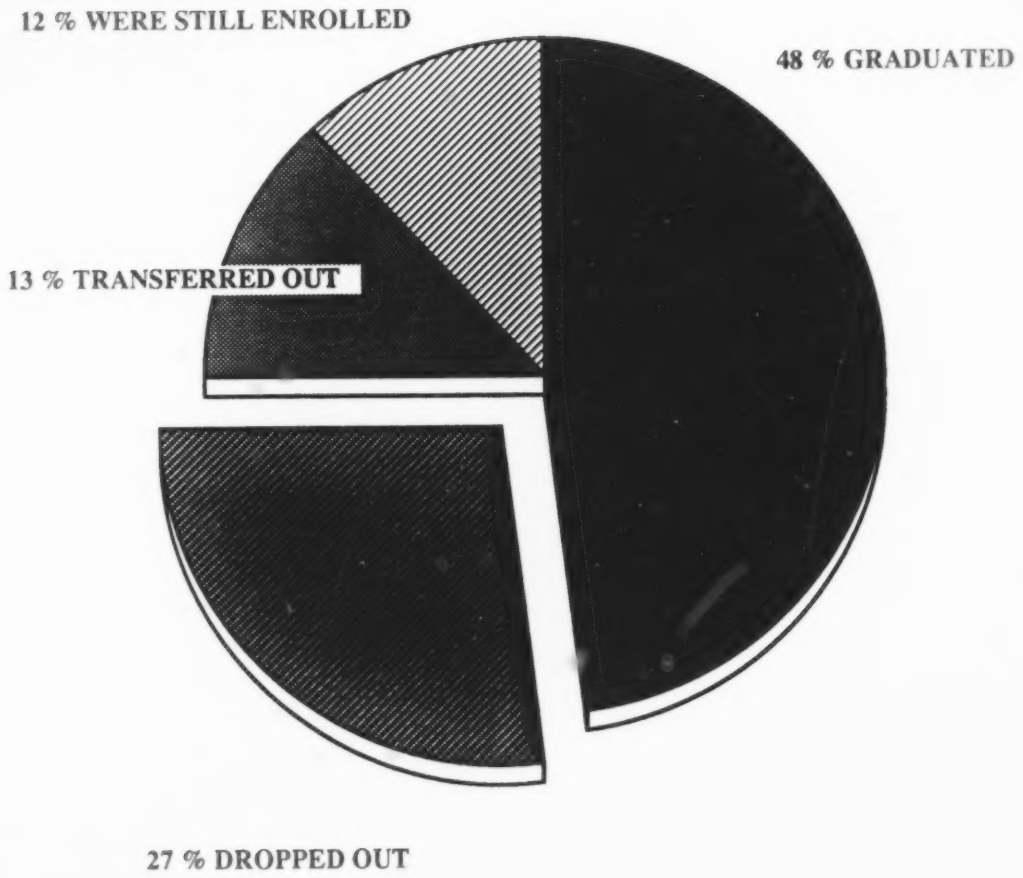
Our analysis of the preliminary data also indicated that some small numbers of students from the other categories (dropout, graduate and transfer out) returned to school and shifted categories during 1986-87, i.e., 345 dropouts returned to school and completed their education during 1986-87. The impact of all of the changes in status that occurred to members of the class of 1986 in 1986-87 are displayed in the following table.

The Class Of 1986

Category	Status as of 6/30/86	Net Change in 1986-87	Status as of 6/30/87
Dropout	15,602 (22%)	+ 3,987	19,589 (27%)
Graduate or Other School Completer	29,310 (41%)	+ 5,178	34,488 (48%)
Transfer Out	8,754 (12%)	+ 332	9,086 (13%)
Still Active or Unknown Status	17,818 (25%)	- 9,497	8,321 (12%)

The June 30, 1987 status of students from the class of 1986 is also displayed in the attached figure.

Outcomes for the Class of 1986
As of June 30, 1987
(preliminary)



Number of Students = 71,484